

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /083 W

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P R 161811Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9887

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AMEMBASSY OSLO

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

USNMR SHAPE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, ELAB, PINT

SUBJECT: THE TRADE UNIONS INTO THE BREACH: A CALL FOR
UNITY

REF: (A) LONDON 3988; (B) LONDON 3917

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1. BEGIN SUMMARY: LEADERS OF BRITAIN'S THREE MOST POWER

FUL UNIONS: JACK JONES (TRANSPORT WORKERS), HUGH SCANLON (ENGINEERS), AND DAVID BASNETT (GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS) HAVE ISSUED AN UNUSUAL JOINT CALL FOR UNITY WITH IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT -- TRADE UNIONS, PARTY AND GOVERNMENT. THEIR PLEA COMES IN THE WAKE OF THE BITTER CONTENTIOUSNESS BETWEEN LEFT-WING PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THE GOVERNMENT IN A ROW OVER EXPENDITURE (REF A). THE STARTLING NEWS OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION (SEPTTEL) MAKES THEIR DECLARATION EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT. END SUMMARY.

2. THESE LEADERS ARE THE "BIG THREE" OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. MEMBERSHIP IN THEIR UNIONS -- ABOUT 4,000,000 -- REPRESENTS 2/5THS OF THE TUC'S TOTAL AFFILIATION. TH THREE MEN ISSUED THEIR URGENT CALL FOR UNITY AFTER MEETIN IN EMERGENCY SESSION YESTERDAY (MARCH 15) TO CONSIDER THE IMPACT ON THE FORTUNES OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT AS A WHOLE OF THE LABOR PARTY PARLIAMENTARY SPLIT, THE POOR SHOWING OF THE PARTY IN RECENT BY-ELECTIONS (REF B), AND THE GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION.

3. THEY DECLARED: "TRADE UNIONISTS WANT TO ENSURE THAT THE GAINS SECURED FOR WORKERS BY THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE ERODED," ALTHOUGH THEY RECOGNIZED THAT "GENUINE DIFFERENCES OF VIEW" EXIST AS TO HOW TO RESOLVE THE ECONOMIC CRISIS. IN A REFERENCE TO THE BITTER INTRA-PARTY PERSONAL ATTACKS WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE DEBATE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPENDITURE CUTS (REF A), THE TUC LEADERS SAID THAT NEITHER "PERSONAL SPLEEN NOR ATTEMPTS TO APPORTION BLAME ARE HELPFUL."

4. THE TUC LEADERS PLACED CONSIDERABLE EMPHASIS ON THE APRIL BUDGET AS A MEANS TO DEAL WITH THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND IN PARTICULAR THE HIGH LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT. BUT TO DEAL WITH THE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT, THEY ARE PROPOSING THAT THERE BE A TUC-LABOR PARTY LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING VERY SHORTLY AFTER THE BUDGET IS ANNOUNCED' FOLLOWING WHICH THEY PROPOSE A MEETING BETWEEN THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY AND ALL LABOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT. FINALLY, THEY PROPOSED A SPECIAL TUC CONGRESS OR CONFERENCE OF UNION EXECUTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TIVES.

5. COMMENT: THE EXTRAORDINARY CALL FOR UNITY IS MADE
MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT IN THE LIGHT OF THE LATER NEWS THAT
PRIME MINISTER WILSON IS RESIGNING. THE UNCERTAINTIES
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WHICH FOLLOW THIS DEVELOPMENT MAKE TRADE UNION-LABOR PARTY-GOVERNMENT UNITY ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT.

6. ORDINARILY IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SURPRISING FOR JACK JONES AND DAVID BASNETT, TWO APOSTLES OF DOMESTIC ECONOMIC MODERATION AND STRONG SUPPORTERS OF LABOR MOVEMENT UNITY, TO ISSUE SUCH A DECLARATION. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT SCANLON JOINED THEM, FOR HIS UNION HAS NOT OFTEN SHARED THE VIEWS REFLECTED BY JONES AND BASNETT. IN ANY EVENT, WHETHER THEY WERE PRIVY TO THE WILSON DECISION OR NOT, THEIR DECLARATION SERVES NOTICE ON THE DIE-HARDS OF THE LEFT-WING TRIBUNE GROUP IN THE PARLIAMENT THAT THEY CANNOT EXPECT FULL SUPPORT FROM THE TUC'S LEFT-WING.

7. AT THE SAME TIME, THE "BIG THREE," IN THEIR CALL, ALSO CONCEDED TO THE PRESSURE FROM SOME OF THE UNIONS IN THE TUC SUCH AS THE TEACHERS, THE PUBLIC WORKERS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICERS, AND OTHER UNIONS FOR A SPECIAL TUC CONFERENCE WHICH COULD DEAL WITH UNEMPLOYMENT, PUBLIC EXPENDITURE, AND POSSIBLY HELP CLARIFY TRADE UNION VIEWS ON THE NEXT WAGE ROUND. THE SUCCESS OF THESE TRADE UNION UNITY EFFORTS WILL BE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO WHOEVER TAKE THE REINS FROM HAROLD WILSON.

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